Coordinates: 37.809801°S 144.964787°E

State Library Victoria

The **State Library Victoria** is the main library of the Australian state of Victoria. Located in Melbourne, it was established in 1854 as the Melbourne Public Library, making it Australia's oldest public library and one of the first free libraries in the world. It is also Australia's busiest library and, as of 2018, the fourth most-visited library in the world.[5]

The library's vast collection includes over two million books and 350,000 photographs, manuscripts, maps and newspapers, with a special focus on material from Victoria, including the diaries of the city's founders, John Batman and John Pascoe Fawkner, the folios of Captain James Cook, and the armour of Ned Kelly. The library is located in the northern centre of the central business district, on the block bounded by Swanston, La Trobe, Russell, and Little Lonsdale streets.

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State Library Victoria

Established	1854
Location	Melbourne, Victoria, Australia
Collection	
Size	2,277,209 monographs, newspapers and serials (30 June 2014)[1]
Other information	
Budget	$86.7M (FY 2013-14)[2]
Director	Kate Torney (CEO)[3]
Staff	273 (248.04 FTE)[4]
Website	www.slv.vic.gov.au (http://www.slv.vic.gov.au)
Map	

History

A statue of Sir Redmond Barry, located within the library's forecourt

In 1853, the decision to build a combined library, museum and gallery was made at the instigation of Lieutenant-Governor Charles La Trobe and Mr Justice Redmond Barry, Q.C. (Sir Redmond from 1860). A competition was held, won by the recently arrived architect Joseph Reed, whose firm and its successors went on to design most of the later extensions, as well as numerous 19th-century landmarks such as the Melbourne Town Hall, and the Royal Exhibition Building.

Melbourne Public Library (later State Library Victoria), southern portion of Swanston Street frontage, ca. 1860, State Library Victoria pictures collection.

On the same day of 3 July 1854, the recently inaugurated Governor Sir Charles Hotham laid the foundation stone of both the new library complex and the University of Melbourne. The library's the first stage (the central part of the Swanston Street wing) opened on 11 February 1856, with a collection of 3,800 books chosen by Mr Justice Barry, the President of Trustees. Augustus H. Tulk, the first librarian, was appointed three months after the opening. The Melbourne Public Library as it was then known was one of the first free public libraries in the world, open to anyone over 14 years of age, so long as they had clean hands.[6]

The complex of buildings that now house the Library were built in numerous stages, housing various library spaces, art galleries and museum displays, finally filling the entire block in 1992.[7] In 1860 Joseph Reed designed a grand complex for the whole block including a domed section facing Russell Street to House the Museum and Gallery, painting a broad canvas that was more or less followed over the next century.

Library forecourt, ca. 1864-1870 after the completion of Queen's Hall but before construction of the portico.

The next stage was the south part of the front wing, opened in 1859, including the elaborate first floor Queen's Reading Room (now Queen's Hall). The northern part was added complete in 1864 by Abraham Linacre,[8] but the classical portico was not built until 1870. Other wings were built are various times, such as Barry Hall, along Little Lonsdale Street, in 1886, McCoy Hall (named for Frederick McCoy, the first director of the National Museum of Victoria[9], and now the Redmond Barry reading boom), built for the Museum in 1892, Baldwin Spencer Hall facing Russell Street in 1909, and the McAllan Gallery on the LaTrobe Street side, built in 1932.

A number of halls were built in 1866 for the Intercolonial Exhibition of Australasia just behind the front wing; meant to be temporary, they remained in use until 1909, when work began on the library's famed Domed Reading Room, began. Opened in 1913, it was designed by Bates, Peebles and Smart, the successor to Joseph Reed's firm, now known as Bates Smart.[10] In 1959, the dome's skylights were covered in copper sheets due to water leakage, creating the dim atmosphere that characterised the Library for decades.

The Library Museums and National Gallery Act 1869 formed a single body to run the Public Library of Victoria, National Gallery of Victoria, National Museum of Victoria (which moved to Library site in 1889), and the Industrial and Technological Museum of Victoria. The Public Library, National Gallery and Museums Act 1944 separated these into four separate institutions sharing the one site.

Library forecourt, ca. 1875, with recently constructed portico and cast iron fencing.

The National Gallery of Victoria eventually moved to a new purpose built home in St Kilda Road in 1968 (during renovations of these buildings the gallery returned to its original home briefly from 1999-2002, occupying the Russell Street halls). In 1971 the Lending Library closed. Melbourne's CBD was to be without a public lending library until the opening of the City Library in 2004.[11]

The Public Record Office Victoria was once the Archives Department of the Library. In 1973 the Public Records Act established the Public Record Office Victoria as the state's archive authority, independent of the Library. The Office moved to Laverton in 1977, then to purpose built home in North Melbourne in 2004. The PROV now frequently supplies exhibits for the Old Treasury Building museum.

Aerial view from above Swanston Street

The National Museum and Industrial and Technological Museum merged in 1983 to form the Museum of Victoria. Parts of this combined museum were moved to other sites during the 1990s, with the bulk of the galleries remaining until 1997. At that time the remaining museum closed temporarily before moving to the Carlton Gardens in 2000 as the Melbourne Museum.

The library underwent major refurbishments between 1990 and 2004, designed by architects Ancher Mortlock & Woolley. The project cost approximately A$200 million. The reading room closed in 1999 to allow for renovation, when the skylights were reinstated. The renamed La Trobe Reading Room reopened in 2003.

The redevelopment included the creation of a number of exhibition spaces, some of which are used to house permanent exhibitions *The Mirror of the World: Books and Ideas* and *The Changing Face of Victoria* as well as a display from the Pictures Collection in the Cowen Gallery. As a result of the redevelopment, State Library Victoria can now be considered one of the largest exhibiting libraries in the world.

In February 2010, the southern wing of the library on Little Lonsdale Street was reopened as the Wheeler Centre, part of Melbourne's city of literature initiative.

In 2015 the Library embarked on a five-year, A$88.1 million redevelopment project, Vision 2020,[12] to transform its public spaces, programs and facilities to better meet the changing needs of the community. On 29 April 2015 the Minister for Creative Industries Martin Foley announced that the 2015–16 State Budget would provide A$55.4 million towards the redevelopment of State Library Victoria, including the restoration of the Queen's Hall, the creation of a rooftop garden terrace, a dedicated children's and youth space, and the opening up 40 percent more of the building to the public.[13] In late 2017, the library's contribution of A$27 million from donations was eventually raised.[14] In September 2018, the main Swanston Street entrance was temporarily closed and replaced by the newly refurbished Russell Street and La Trobe Street entrances.[15]

In December 2019 the Library officially completed its Vision 2020 redevelopment project, increasing public spaces by 40%, refurbishing existing reading rooms and providing additional services for children and families.[16]

Forecourt

A view of the library from the left side facing Swanston Street

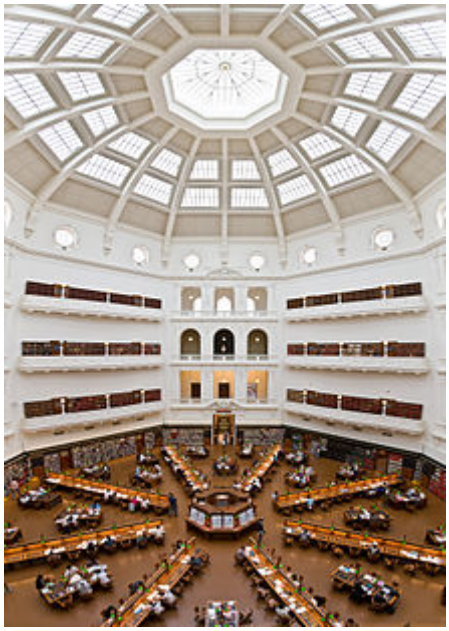
The grassy lawn in front of the library's grand entrance on Swanston Street is a popular lunch-spot for the city's workers and students at the adjacent RMIT University. Originally enclosed by a picket fence, then by a wrought iron fence and gates in the 1870s, the space was opened up with the removal of the fence and the creation of diagonal paths in 1939.[17]

The forecourt includes a number of statues. A pair of bronze lions flanked the entry from the 1860s until they were removed in 1937 due to deterioration. A memorial statue of Mr Justice Sir Redmond Barry, Q.C., by James Gilbert[18] and built by Percival Ball was installed on the central landing of the main stairs in 1887. Flanking the entrance plaza are Saint George and the Dragon, by the English sculptor Sir Joseph Edgar Boehm, installed in 1889 and Jeanne d'Arc (Joan of Arc), a replica of the statue by French sculptor Emmanuel Frémiet, installed in 1907. WW1 commemorative statues 'Wipers' and 'The Driver' were at the centre points of the 1939 diagonal paths, but were relocated to the ground of the Shrine of Remembrance in 1998.[19] A statue of Charles La Trobe, by Australian sculptor Peter Corlett, was installed in 2006 in the north east corner of the lawn.[20]

On Sundays between 2:30 pm and 5:30 pm, a speakers' forum takes place on the library forecourt, where orators take turns in speaking on various subjects, and it is popular location for protest meetings and a rallying point for marches.

Reading Rooms

The Dome



The La Trobe Reading Room

The landmark Domed Reading Room was opened in 1913, and was designed by Norman G. Peebles of Bates Smart. Its octagonal space was designed to hold over a million books and up to 600 readers. It is 34.75 m in both diameter and height, and its oculus is nearly 5 m wide. The dome was the largest in the world on completion.[21][22]

In 2003, it was officially renamed the LaTrobe Reading Room, and now houses the Library's Australiana collection, previously in the 1965 La Trobe Building annex.[23] Levels 4 and 5 of the Dome galleries house the free permanent exhibitions "World of the book" and "The changing face of Victoria", while level 6 provides visitors with a view of the reading room below.

The Ian Potter Queen's Hall

The central portion of Ian Potter Queen's Hall opened in 1856 as the Library's original reading room. It closed to the public in 2003 due to disrepair, before being renovated and reopened in 2019 as a mixed-use study space containing Victorian young adult literature. After hours, the Ian Potter Queen's Hall functions as a special events venue.

Chess Collection

The library houses a wide range of materials dedicated to the history, study and practice of chess. It contains a collection of items from the Anderson Chess Collection, one of the three largest public chess collections in the world. In addition to bookshelves containing an extensive range of books and periodicals relating to chess, the room has game tables with chessboards and pieces, and a few glass cabinets containing historical chess paraphernalia. The Chess Room was closed in February 2017 with collections temporarily moved to the LaTrobe Reading Room. In 2019, the chess collection and game sets were relocated to the renovated Ian Potter Queen's Hall.

Redmond Barry Reading Room

Located at the eastern end of the library, Redmond Barry Reading Room was until 1997 known as McCoy Hall, and was home to the National Museum (now Melbourne Museum)[24]. It is now home to the library's contemporary collection of books, magazines and periodicals with the mezzanine housing folio-size books and providing additional independent study desks.

The Redmond Barry Reading Room

Heritage Collections Reading Room

This closed-access reading room provides a space to view heritage collection materials. There are 14 historical pendant lamps hanging off the ceiling and a detailed ceramic embossed wall and ceiling. Map bags are the only collection of materials held in HCRR and consist of copies of maps of metropolitan Melbourne between the 1800s to 1900s and can be viewed without appointment, for all other collections entry to the Heritage Collections Reading Room is by appointment only.

Arts Reading Room

The library maintains an extensive, world-class collection of books, periodicals, recordings and other materials pertaining to art, music and the performing arts. The Arts Reading Room is located beside the Newspaper and Family History Reading Room at the eastern end of the building, and contains workspaces for quiet study and AV equipment for providing access to the library's vast array of AV resources.

The National Museum's McCoy Hall ca. 1910, later converted to the Redmond Barry Reading Room.

Newspaper and Family History Reading Room

Relocated beside the Redmond Barry Reading room in 2018, this room contains a comprehensive collection of Victorian newspaper titles on microfilm, as well as some interstate titles. Modern microfilm reader/scanners enable patrons to save images of newspapers to USB memory stick. Physical copies of current Victorian newspapers are available for use, with three months worth stored onsite. Services related to family history include a vast collection of microfilm and microfiche, printed references, databases, and biographies. Research tools for newspaper and family history research include computers, printers and scanners, with a specialist librarian available for reference inquiries.

Collections

The La Trobe Journal

Founded by the Friends of State Library Victoria in 1968 to promote interest in the Library's Australiana collection, in 1998, the State Library Victoria Foundation became the sponsor of the journal, enabling the publication to expand considerably. As of 2013 it is published twice a year in Autumn and Spring.[25]

Databases

Many of the library's electronic databases are available from home to any Victorian registered as a State Library User. Databases include the full *Encyclopædia Britannica*; Oxford Reference dictionaries and encyclopaedias; multi-subject magazine and journal article databases; newspaper archives of most major Australian and international papers from 2000 onwards; and specialist subject databases.

Photographs

The library's collection includes 2,000 rolls of film containing photographs of Melbourne and country Victoria from the early 1970s. These 70,000 photographs are in the process of being digitized and made available to the public.[26]

The library holds a significant amount of material related to bushranger and outlaw Ned Kelly, most notably the armour he wore during his final shootout with the police.

Services

State Library Victoria provides education programmes for community and schools, conferences such as Reading Matters and library research fellowships. The library is home to the Centre for Youth Literature and the *Inside a dog* young adult fiction community.[27][28] From 1994-2014 it managed the Vicnet community internet service.[29]

National edeposit (NED)

As a member library of National and State Libraries Australia (NSLA), the organisation collaborated on the creation of the National edeposit (NED) system, which enables publishers from all over Australia to upload electronic publications as per the 2016 amendment to the *Copyright Act 1968* and other regional legislation relating to legal deposit,[30] and makes these publications publicly accessible online (depending on access conditions) from anywhere via Trove.[31] As CEO of State Library Victoria and Chair of NSLA, Kate Torney played an important role on the steering committee, which met 100 times during the two-year build phase of the project.[32]

In popular culture

The exterior of the library is prominently featured at the conclusion of the post-World War III movie *On the Beach*.

Rock band Faker shot the music video for their 2005 single "Hurricane" in the LaTrobe Reading Room.

Gallery

The State Library illuminated at night

State Library Victoria (Cowen Gallery - Stawell Room)

State Library Victoria (Cowen Gallery - McArthur Room)

State Library Victoria (Cowen Gallery)

State Library Victoria (Exhibition of Stained Glass - William Shakespeare in the Dome Gallery)

February 2014 - Library forecourt from Swanston St, statue of Sir Redmond Barry, and members of the Public gathered on the lawns)

LaTrobe Reading Room in July 2019

See also

- Edmund la Touche Armstrong
- Museums Victoria
- National Gallery of Victoria

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External links

- State Library Victoria's Official Website (http://www.slv.vic.gov.au/)
- Wheeler Centre (http://wheelercentre.com/)
- State Library Victoria Foundation (http://slv.vic.gov.au/about-us/organisation-governance/foundation)
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- Inside a dog (https://insideadog.com.au)

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